



#GeisingerGrateful

Paul Russell honors GCMC Cancer Center

Paul Russell of Waymart, Pa., had been healthy his whole life. At 74 years old, he felt lucky that he had not been to a hospital for care since he was in his 20s. That's why he was anxious about going to the Emergency Department when he developed severe abdominal pain in August 2016. Thankfully, Paul made the decision to go anyway. And that decision saved his life. Doctors discovered a cancerous tumor in his colon — a tumor which was nearly rupturing his intestines. He needed immediate surgery.



Just five hours after Paul arrived at Geisinger Community Medical Center (GCMC), Richard Lopez, DO, performed Paul's first surgery, which was necessary to repair the emergent tear in his intestines. Paul came out of that surgery with a colostomy bag and a second surgery scheduled — but also with gratitude to Dr. Lopez for saving his life. "I am very grateful for Dr. Lopez's knowledge, skill and professionalism at a time when I needed it most," said Paul.

On Sept. 19, Dr. Lopez performed the second surgery to remove the tumor and reverse the colostomy. After a successful operation, Paul recovered on the fourth-floor trauma unit at GCMC. He says that the experience was very positive, despite his reason for being there. "The nursing staff were very helpful, attentive and pleasant," said Paul. "Even the students who were in training showed concern [and] interest, and took time explaining things to me."

A month later, Paul began the next round of his treatment with chemotherapy. His outpatient experience would prove to be as positive as the inpatient one. Gregory Formanek, MD, and Wendy Bell, RN, providers at the newly opened Cancer Center at GCMC, treated him with the utmost care. Paul notes that the compassion he experienced went beyond his regular medical care.

"Receptionist Michele Carey went out of her way to make all the necessary arrangements for my follow-up care," said Paul. "I'm very comfortable with everyone there. If you can imagine, I actually look forward to going there."

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His treatment was completed in May 2017. Paul gives credit to his positive outlook for speeding along his recovery, as well as the “great team” at the Cancer Center. Paul wanted to share his gratitude for the care and compassion he received not only while in the hospital, but also during his treatment. His gift to the GCMC Cancer Center gives Paul the opportunity to help ensure this same care is available to other patients like him.

“Although this has been a very traumatic experience to go through, I am very glad and grateful for the care I have received,” said Paul. “No one wants to have to go to the hospital. But for times when I do, I want to go to Geisinger.”